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# Forest Communiqué

The Voice of Forest Unlimited

Fall 2014

## Chopping Up the County

At the time of this writing, there are two groups challenging the County's failure to subject large agricultural projects (in these cases new vineyards) to environmental review. This failure leaves oak woodlands, streams, and neighbors unprotected from the impacts of large scale intensive agriculture development.

The band of mothers known as the Water-trough Children's Alliance filed suit when the infamous Paul Hobbs team was permitted to rip out orchards near their children's schools. The County allowed this without an analysis of pesticide used or analysis of the potential impacts of dust laden with metals on children within very close proximity, or without requiring the applicant to mitigate these potential impacts.

Children and the elderly are more vulnerable to contaminants than healthy adults. The County issued a ministerial permit (the equivalent of a dog license) for this intense development. No potential impacts were analyzed so impacts could not be properly mitigated.



*Important oak woodlands like this one are currently NOT protected from destruction in Sonoma County*

*Continued on P. 7*

## Opportunity for Creekside Trees

In 2008, the County updated its General Plan to include changes to how it would review land use near watercourses. It is now six years later. The County is attempting to codify the changes which would make some improvements to riparian protections.

Although the "outrage machine" of the Farm Bureau types is in gear, these changes in the General Plan are very incremental, not drastic or adequate.

On August 27, 2014, the National Marine Fisheries Service commented on the current ordinance process by reminding the County that back in 2008, NMFS did NOT concur with the minimal setback requirements insofar as they would not protect the threatened and endangered anadromous fish and the proposed setbacks were not based upon the best available science.

*"NMFS wishes to first remind the County that we did not concur that the proposed riparian buffer widths adopted by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors in the 2008 County General Plan update were sufficiently protective of salmonids, or were they based upon best available science. While NMFS recognizes that this issue is not under review, we believe our prior concerns*



*Lower Green Valley Creek riparian zone.*

*Continued on P. 7*

# Water Shortage Remedy Required for Agriculture

California water use is complex and controversial especially in a drought.

Healthy and abundant forests are a key component in ameliorating climate change effects. Unlimited draw down of groundwater severely stresses our forests. Water that is drawn directly from streams or from streamside wells can cause streams to go dry which also stresses or kills trees in the watershed and by lowering the water table so roots can't reach water. This not only causes harm to fish and wildlife, but wells can go dry.

Most official responses and media statements fail to report the basic facts of water use. The key is that about 80% of California water is used by agriculture. Individuals use only 14 % and industry uses 6%. Agricultural use far exceeds people watering their lawns, showering, flushing, etc. Even minor changes in the agricultural usage would conserve more than individuals can achieve.

You will hear that the water problems are caused by burgeoning population but the 80%/14%/6% split in water use shows this is untrue. This lopsided usage distribution is very different from electricity use where residential, commercial and industrial uses are about equal, so individual conservation measures have as much impact as any other sector.

California's water deficit is about 6 million acre-feet (MAF) which is about 15% of the 40 MAF of developed water. One acre-foot is the amount of water to cover one acre to a depth of one foot, or 325,851 gallons. This deficit is remedied by groundwater pumping which dewater streams and lowers the water table. Since the deficit is more than the total individual use, the water shortage will not be remedied without changes in agricultural water use. Just as the numbers suggest, individual conservation has not solved the drought related problems.

## California Crops Are Water Hungry

One of the main reasons agriculture uses so much water is that California today grows increasingly water hungry crops. Beef requires 1500 gal/lb, nuts 900 gal/lb, grapes 240 gal/lb while vegetables use only 33 gal/lb. One liter of wine

requires 960 liters of water. This means if a restaurant provides water only on request and more than **one** person in 960 has an extra glass of wine instead of water (very plausible), more water is consumed than if water is provided to everyone !

Someone might say that California vegetables feed the US, but according to the New York Times:

"Grown on over a million acres in California, alfalfa sucks up more water than any other crop in the state. And it has one primary destination: cattle."

"Californians are sending their alfalfa, and thus their water, to Asia. The reason is simple. It's more profitable to ship alfalfa hay from California to China than from the Imperial Valley to the Central Valley. Alfalfa growers are now exporting some 100 billion gallons of water a year from this drought-ridden region to the other side of the world in the form of alfalfa. "

There is no simple answer to the water problems we have in California. But if we understand the essential patterns of water use especially by agriculture, we can we develop a sustainable solution that provides water for all people while preserving our forests and our agricultural economy

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## *Remember "The Redwood Empire"*



*Wine Country or Wired Country?*

## Vineyards are Indeed a Problem for Water

Although the Wine Spectator has articles extolling the virtues of dry-farmed wines, more than 90% of the grapes in Napa are irrigated. Equivalent data for Sonoma is not available, but it is probably about the same. The Napa wines that won the blind competition in France way back when were all dry-farmed. Grape vines are well suited to our dry climate and when not watered can establish root systems 30 feet to 50 feet. This is deeper than the root systems of our iconic redwoods! Irrigation increases and controls yield, maximizes profits, but may also dilute the quality of the product.

The University of California Agricultural Extension Service recommends watering wine grapes about 1 acre-foot per year and increasing with established vines. Occasionally one will hear that only young vines need to be watered, but this is not standard practice. Using these recommendations, it is possible to calculate the ratio of water use of the towns in Sonoma County that pump water and what the vineyards use, assuming 90% are irrigated and the UC recommendations are followed. What you get is the 80/20 split between agriculture and what people directly use.

Vineyards also exacerbate the runoff problem. Most of the rain that falls on a vineyard quickly runs off down the rivers into the sea. This causes flooding and is not best for the fish. This is contrary to what happens in a forest which retains a great deal of the water, slowly releasing it to the benefit of people, trees and fish.

Agricultural use of groundwater is not currently measured, although the laws requiring this have been in place since 2011 but are being flaunted. New groundwater legislation may remedy some of the excesses depending on how it is implemented.

## Pipeline is Back *(cont. from p. 3)*

Three additional pits will accommodate fire hydrants. It is inevitable that trees, some thousands of years old, will be damaged when their roots are cut by trenching and excavation. Horizontal drilling will also introduce "drilling mud" into the Nature Reserve which may contain contaminants which will impact the environment or enter the stream.

We believe this huge engineering feat is absolutely unnecessary, wasteful of tax dollars, and harmful to the old growth redwoods and the entire reserve biota. The old system is leaking so the practicable solution is to have leaking sections replaced or put in a new line along the same route that exists. Double the size? What kind of development down the road is being planned? We don't know and they are not saying. One thing is certain. Armstrong State Reserve is a "reserve" within the framework of state law that has special protections that preclude development for improvements for people above the value of the biota. It is crucial that as many people as possible attend those meetings.

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*As I spent the quiet days in the wild regions of Alaska, I clarified my own concepts of re-creation versus recreation. I saw more clearly the true value of wilderness and the dangers of diluting its finest areas with the imposed accessories of civilization. In Alaska, I felt the full force of vast space and wilderness, In contrast, the wild areas of the Lower Forty-eight are relatively confined and threatened with increasing accessibility.\**

Ansel Adams

*\*Accessibility in the 1940s meant different things than today*

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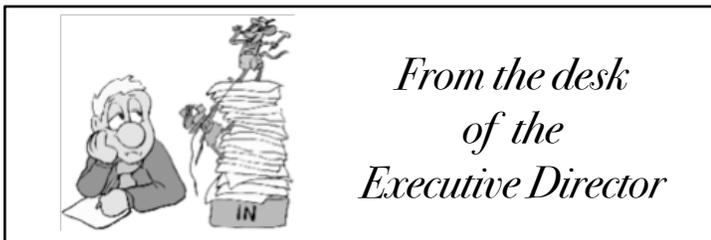
### **Public Meetings on the Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve Waterline Improvement Project**

**Where: Monte Rio Community Center, Redwood Room**

**When: Thursday, October 9, 5pm – 9pm  
and Saturday, November 1, 11-3 pm**

**See you there!**

Please **confirm the dates** before attending due to changes by the County (call **565-2241**).



## Reduce Catastrophic Fires?

Fire season in California is normally a tense time. Particularly in Sonoma County where so many of us live in and about the forest and depend upon the tourism that it generates. The recent large fires in Mendocino County and the ongoing drought has only heightened our fears.

One would think that Cal Fire would be looking for ways to decrease the likelihood and intensity of fires. One would expect that the Governor and the Legislature, who must allocate taxpayer money to fire fighting, would be interested in ways to decrease the frequency and damage of fires. So I offer some suggestions.

It has been known for a long time that clearcutting, contrary to intuition, actually increases the likelihood of catastrophic fire. In 1970 a Stanford University study by Allan Cox and Davison Soper documented this effect. They found a high correlation between those areas that were clearcut and those areas that experienced major fires. The likelihood of fire in heavily cut areas was nearly 10 times greater than in uncut forests! In fact in 1969, a court of law confirmed that clearcutting increases fire danger.

Hear is what the research shows:

- 1) A great deal of slash is left over from a clearcut which is where a majority of fires start and spread. In response to public pressure Cal Fire instituted meager regulation of slash but the industry fought them and the final regulations were totally inadequate.
- 2) After a clearcut, larger areas are opened up to grasses which dry out in the summer increasing flammability.
- 3) Clearcuts usually require extensive roadbuilding which produces even more slash and opens up formerly inaccessible areas to hikers, campers, fisherman, marijuana growers and the homeless with their campfires.
- 4) Clearcutting large areas changes the microclimate from cool, still and humid to hot, windy and dry. Shade no longer exists. There are no trees transpiring water vapor to increase humidity.

Without the capture of fog by conifers, the forest floor dries out without the larger fire-resistant trees.

Redwoods in particular are fire-resistant due to their fibrous fireproof bark and retention of huge amounts of water.

5) Due to the dry microclimate, regrowth is generally limited to fire-prone brush species like bay and tanoak. Brush also grows back after the first fire setting up conditions for a fire encore. A clearcut is the "gift" that keeps on giving.

Of course climate change is making all these effects worse. And clearcutting is making climate change worse. Trees absorb the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide and convert it into cellulose. Clearcutting a forest halts this process. But worse still, the resulting forest fires release all that sequestered carbon dioxide back into the atmosphere!

Inexplicably, clearcuts are still legal! In fact they are still done on a large scale by Gualala Redwoods Inc. along the Gualala River in northwestern Sonoma County.

If Cal Fire, the Legislature, and Governor are serious about reducing the costs of forest fires to lives, property, taxpayers and the climate, they will ban clearcuts!



Forest Unlimited is a 501(c)(3) organization whose purpose is to protect, enhance, and restore forests and watersheds of Sonoma County. Forest Unlimited educates the public on logging plans, forestry law, and regulation.

[www.forestunlimited.org](http://www.forestunlimited.org) [contact@forestunlimited.org](mailto:contact@forestunlimited.org)

[www.facebook.com/ForestUnlimited](https://www.facebook.com/ForestUnlimited)

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# Logging Committee Report

The Logging Review Committee submitted comments to Cal Fire on two Timber Harvest Plans (THPs). The first, designated 1-14-047 SON (Richardson is the owner, Hoveland the forester) in Stewart's Point was approved by Cal Fire. Logging here is of concern because it is on the east side of Hwy 1, immediately adjacent to Salt Point State Park. This area has been and continues to be logged extensively under many different plans and it believed that many of the log trucks going north on Hwy 1 are from other Richardson tracts. Although this is a group selection (total 376 acres), this is a form of clearcutting and some of the logged areas will be visible from the park and degrade the viewshed. There are class II streams, but their course does not allow fish passage into the Pacific.

The second is in Napa County (1-13-126 NAP). It is for the Calistoga Resort which is a development in the hills to the east above the town of Calistoga. To build the resort 88 acres would be logged using single tree selection. Comments were submitted by Forest Unlimited and others causing the plan to be returned with a new comment period.

Key to both plans is how will greenhouse gas limits be addressed as required by California law. It is unfortunate that professional state agencies are not more active in plan review to ensure conformance to state law. Instead, they leave it to the public to raise these important issues. Failure to address greenhouse gas limits is one of the reasons the Calistoga Resort Plan was returned. As of this writing there are no other outstanding THPs in Sonoma County.

## Sudden Oak Death

Forest Unlimited attended a SOD Management Meeting hosted by the University of California Cooperative Extension-Sonoma, and the Gold Ridge Conservation District at the Salmon Creek School. There were a series of excellent talks - summary information and links are on the Forest Unlimited website. One key point was that tanoaks are in a very precarious situation and very little has been found to save or protect them. The forest experts are actively seeking any resistant strains or individual trees. Extraordinary efforts may save black oaks including spray, and elimination of nearby bay trees.

## Tree Removal for Fire and Hazard

Many have noticed that there are tree services that actively encourage the removal of trees within 150' of a structure as fire protection. This is done under a special exemption to standard logging regulations. Typically this is done at low/no or cost to the property owner while the tree company keeps the wood in exchange. Cal Fire says this is a commercial activity that comes under their regulations unless wood is left to rot or hauled to dump. It is not obvious that removing large trees, especially redwoods, in this way actually does anything for fire protection.

It was also learned from Cal Fire that the threatened dwellings must be properly permitted to be eligible for this type of permit. Permits under this exemption are NOT online, it is necessary to go to the Cal Fire office to search and investigate the permit applications.

## Armstrong Pipeline is Back!

The plan to tunnel underneath and through the roots of Armstrong's old growth redwoods is still moving forward. The Department of Parks and Recreation proposes to replace the existing 4" waterline with an 8" waterline ( claimed to be required by the State Fire Marshall for fire suppression but this is controversial) from the front of the park near the kiosk to the existing 50,000-gallon water tank near the administration building at the back of the Park. Work would use Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) as the primary method of installation and would use open trenching at connection points or short distances where HDD would not be practical or cost effective.

We have looked at the plans and walked the area in question. The actual plans require at least five large pits, up to 20' by 20' by 20' deep to get the drilling rigs into for the horizontal drilling through and under the entire length of the state reserve.

*Continued on P. 5*

## Tips for More Effective Monitoring of Logging in Your Area

- Notice any signage or public notices in the neighborhood and read them for information with respect to proposed development.
- Know your tree types - take “before” pictures of healthy trees that might one day be the subject of a logging proposal.
- Know the zoning and allowable land use in your neighborhood.
- Keep a digital camera handy and know how to download to your computer or device for quick transmission if need be to press, regulatory agencies, and local groups.
- Know how far the nearest water course is in the number of “feet” from trees.
- If you think you hear owls or other potential wildlife, learn about it, get it documented, and put

in the Natural Diversity Database (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/>)

- Keep the following numbers in easy reach: Cal Fire (707-576-2275) and Cal Fire Ranger Unit (707-576-2285)  
Sonoma County Permit and Resource Department (PRMD 707-565-1900);  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW 707- 944-5588);  
Northern California Regional Water Quality Control Board (NCRWQCB 707- 576-2220);  
National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS 707- 575-6050);  
Forest Unlimited (707-632-6070),  
[www.forestunlimited.org](http://www.forestunlimited.org)



**REMINDER: All Species Ball October 24, 2014!**

**Details on the last page (p. 8)**

## Streaming for Forests

We have all heard of streams - streams of water, streams of data, and video streaming. We are hoping to interest Forest Unlimited supporters in a free and easy funding stream called eScrip.

Just sign up at Olivers or Fircrest Markets and they will send a percentage of your purchase to Forest Unlimited. For more information and a list of other participating merchants go to: <http://www.escrip.com/merchants/search/>

Thank you

## **Opportunity for Trees** *(cont. from p. 1)*

*regarding the adopted riparian widths, the allowed agricultural exceptions, and the grandfathering of all current land-use footprints as insufficient to protect listed salmonids, provide the context to our specific comments regarding the Proposed Amendments below.*" (National Marine Fisheries Service letter to PRMD, 2014)

Creeks and streams need an adequate riparian zone. This critical zone is currently made up of largely unprotected trees and vegetation that increase ground water recharge, lower evaporation, allow the creek to flood and soak the land, and that provide vital meandering habitat for rare fish species.

The proposed Riparian Ordinance does not address the location of new or old wells relative to the watercourses and allows more lenient set backs for agricultural grading and cultivation. As readers likely know, the riparian forests are vital to a functioning creek insofar as they shade the water and help keep the water cold for the salmon, they create vital bank stability with their roots and thereby moderate lethal sediment inputs to critical pools. Trees and riparian vegetation also help to recharge the groundwater.

Although of increasing importance and usually only a thin strip of land, many private property folks still maintain that it is their right to remove riparian vegetation on their land even if it harms a shared resource or harms a protected fishery. As tax payers continue to fund clean up and restoration to recover the salmon, it makes no economic sense to continue to allow some to undermine that effort. The opposition to the Riparian Ordinance, however, is strong.

As it relates to drilling wells in the riparian zone, the National Marine Fisheries Service which is responsible for protecting steelhead, chinook, and coho salmon has recently commented (August 26, 2014) that, "NMFS is concerned that the County's current permitting processes inadequately analyze potential impacts to steelhead, salmon and their habitats from groundwater and surface flow extraction that stem directly from grading activities and well drilling in Sonoma County. We look forward to working with the County in seeking solutions to these issues that will protect listed fish and other Public Trust Resources while ensuring a thriving, sustainable local economy in the years to come."

The County must pass a meaningful riparian ordinance that is based upon science and that does not permit activities that will contribute to the demise of the hardy salmon and steelhead struggling to survive the many challenges they face.

The revised draft ordinance will be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors on Friday, November 14, at 1:00 p.m. The hearing will be held in the Board of Supervisors Chambers at 575 Administration Drive, Room 102A in Santa Rosa.

Please plan on attending to support stronger riparian zones or commenting along the lines of the scientists at NOAA. Please always confirm with the County the actual date of these hearings as they may change. 565-2241.

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## **Chopping Up** *(cont. from p. 1)*

The Second suit was filed by the Friends of the Gualala River. A large project was submitted to the agricultural commissioner's office first described as a 400 acre new vineyard. At approximately the same time, a large reservoir (91 acre foot) was dug for the vineyard above a tributary of the impaired Gualala River. Since the original submittal, the applicant has chopped the vineyards into smaller chunks, but the reservoir has not shrunk. These large and related impacts have still not been subjected to environmental review and their impacts have not been analyzed or lessened.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) seeks to have decision makers look at the potential cumulative impacts of development activities. Sonoma County continues to put large agriculture developments in a special category. Whatever the outcome of the two important legal challenges, the County must recognize the impacts of big agriculture, stop worsening the impacts to protected fisheries, preserve important carbon sequestering trees, and take deliberate steps to avoid the mistakes of the past.

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**Return Service Requested**

**SAVE THE DATE: ALL LIVING SPECIES COSTUME BALL: Friday, October 24**

**First Annual All Living Species Costume Ball at Masonic Hall in Sebastopol, Friday, Oct. 24, 7 to 11**

The week before Halloween and the Day of the Dead, come and celebrate the Living Species Costume Ball by wearing your favorite living species mask or costume and move your appendages to dance music. Appetizers and non-alcoholic beverages included. Wine and beer will be available. Early bird: \$25/person; \$40/couple. After October 15th, all tickets \$30. Please send checks to: FU, PO Box 506, Forestville CA 95406.

***Clip and mail back with your check in the envelope provided. Thank you!***

**Become a Member of Forest Unlimited**

Your tax-deductable contribution will help fund forestry education programs and forest preservation, protection, and enhancement projects. Members receive newsletters and notification about special events, workshops and logging in their watersheds.

**YES! I would like to join Forest Unlimited to further your work!** (Dues are tax-deductible as permitted)

\_\_ \$200    \_\_ \$100    \_\_ \$50    \_\_ \$35    Other \$ \_\_

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